

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 12, 2004

The Honorable David M. Walker
Comptroller General of the United States
United States General Accounting Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller Walker:

We are writing to request that the GAO investigate the use of Private Military Firms (PMFs) by the Department of Defense and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq.

The appalling abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib Prison, which apparently involved a number of civilians working under government contract, has alerted us to a more general problem related to the widespread use of civilians to perform a variety of essential tasks in Iraq. Through contracts and subcontracts, the CPA has relied on PMFs to perform security duties that were previously carried out by US military personnel, including logistical support, interrogation of prisoners, convoy security, guarding vital facilities and personnel, and training Iraqi army and police forces. The use of PMFs to perform these duties raises a number of serious concerns.

We urge you to carefully perform a comprehensive review of the use of PMFs in Iraq for security activities, including but not limited to:

- The scope and extent to which PMFs are being used in Iraq and how this utilization of PMFs compares with previous conflicts.
- The cost and effectiveness of using civilian workers instead of military personnel for activities broadly defined as related to security;
- Whether DoD budgeting and accounting processes enable the government to predict and track the actual cost of PMFs and the services they provide;
- The screening process required for PMF personnel;
- The statutory authority under which DoD and the CPA have contracted with PMFs to perform security functions, in some cases without security clearance, in Iraq;
- The laws and code of conduct that govern the activities of PMF personnel, including the extent to which PMFs are performing tasks that would be illegal or improper for military personnel;
- Whether the use of PMFs has compromised the military chain of command;
- The extent to which PMFs are involved in security and other "mission critical" activities that would leave our mission in Iraq vulnerable if PMFs were unable or unwilling to continue to perform the duties under their contracts;
- Whether the comparatively higher salaries of PMF personnel are affecting retention or morale among our armed forces;

- The propriety of using humanitarian funds from the Development Fund for Iraq to pay for activities of PMFs.

We have an obligation to our troops and to the people of the United States and Iraq to ensure that any civilians engaged to perform security services in support of the United States mission in Iraq are acting appropriately and are effectively contributing to that mission. We strongly urge you to expedite an investigation in this area and encourage you to contact us for any additional clarification of our concerns. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Gail Pini

Bud Crance

Paul M. Sigala

John Spaul

Karen McCarthy

Bob Edwards

Lothar R.

Neil Abramowitz

Lois Capron

Michael M. Holt

Sam Fann

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~~Col. C. Peto~~

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no show

Jim Langevin

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